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ABSTRACT

The paper explores sex-role determinants of interpersonal interaction and reviews various theories of equity in human interaction. Equity is interpreted as occurring in human interaction when all participants in a relationship receive equal outcomes relative to their inputs. The document is presented in four major sections. Section I reviews literature dealing with reward behaviors. Findings from research studies indicate that males most often prefer allocating rewards on the basis of performance and that females prefer distributing rewards equally regardless of performance. Section II examines how sex-role socialization influences different responses by males and females to rewards. Section III discusses an experiment which tested competing hypotheses concerning reward allocation under conditions of inequity. Specifically, the experiment measured reward allocation patterns of 40 female college students and compared these patterns to the students' preferences for a feminine, masculine, or androgenous sex-role. Section IV presents findings including that women are increasingly adopting behaviors which have been traditionally considered as competitive and masculine. The conclusion is that although differential sex-role socialization of men and women accounts for different patterns of human interaction, sex differences reported in many previous studies may no longer hold true as traditional sex roles for men and women continue to change. (DB)

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SEX-ROLES AND EQUITY BEHAVIOR*

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Since the initial work of Homans (1961) and Adams (1963, 1965), several scholars have investigated the principle of distributive justice or equity in human interaction. A primary concern of equity theory is the distribution of resources among or between interacting individuals. While different distribution "rules" may structure interpersonal exchange relatio (Meeker, 1971), most theorists consider the equity norm to be a fundamental principle governing interpersonal interaction. While there are slight differences among theorists, equity is generally assumed to exist when the rewards and costs are perceived to be proportional, i.e., $\frac{\text{Outcomes A}}{\text{Inputs A}} = \frac{\text{Outcomes B}}{\text{Inputs B}}$ (Adams, 1965).[1] In Walster's (1973) terms, an equitable relationship is said to exist when the person scrutinizing the relationship perceives that all participants are receiving equal outcomes relative to their inputs in the relationship (1976:2). Equity theorists commonly propose that when individuals perceive this reward-cost ratio to be disproportionate they will feel distress and act, cognitively or behaviorally, to restore equity in the relationship.

The findings of many empirical studies have supported the equity principle, both when individuals have been beneficiaries or victims of injustice (e.g. Blumstein & Weinstein, 1969; Pepitone, 1971; Kahn, 1972). Hypotheses derived from and supportive of this general principle have been explored in these and many other studies (e.g. Austin and Walster, 1974; Leventhal & Bergman, 1969; Leventhal & Michaels, 1972; Schmitt & Marwell, 1972; Weinstein, Devaughn, & Wiley, 1969).

While equity theory in general has been supported in much of the research literature, there are several studies which indicate that there are significant differences in equity behavior between males and females.

These studies have reported sex differences in equity behavior and reward allocation behavior in general. Blumstein and Weinstein (1969) for example, report that females, when underpaid relative to their performance, did not redress the inequity by reallocating the rewards when they had the chance to do so. Males did redress the inequity when so victimized. Kahn (1972) examined reactions to inequity among same sex dyads where subjects were told their performance on a task was about the same. The subjects were then either overpaid, equally paid, or underpaid relative to their partner. In each case they were told that their partner was responsible for the reward allocation. On a second task the subject was given the opportunity to divide the rewards. Both males and females took less than their partner if overpaid on the first task and both split the reward equally when their partner had previously split the money equally. However, females took far less for themselves than males when they had previously been underpaid by their partner. Thus males attempted to restore equity of reward allocation but females did not.

Findings similar to these are also reported in other studies. Katz and Messe (1973) found that females subjects split rewards equally even when, according to an equity norm, they deserved more than half the reward. Leventhal and Lane (1970), examining reward allocation among same sex partners, reported that males took more than half the reward when their performance was superior to their partner and less than half when their performance was inferior. Females however, took approximately half the reward when their performance was superior and much less than half when their performance was inferior.

In a study of the apportionment of coalition rewards in same sex triads, Wahba (1972) reports that males preferred differential outcomes

according to individual inputs, while females preferred non-differential outcomes regardless of the inputs of each player . Wyer and Malinowski (1972), in a study of competitiveness in same and mixed sex dyads, found that both sexes behaved in accordance with an equity norm when interacting with members of the same sex. However, they also found a tendency for males to be dominant and females to be submissive in mixed sex dyads. Contrary to the other studies, the findings of Wyer and Malinowski indicate that females minimize their outcomes in interaction with men but not with other women.

Studies of pre-adult populations have also produced findings similar to those discussed above. Benton (1971) examined the attitudes and bargaining behavior of preadolescent girls and boys with respect to the division of rewards following differential productivity. The subjects partners were either friends, non-friends, or neutral persons. Benton reports that boys who successfully performed the task found more acceptable the allocations which favored themselves and an equal allocation less acceptable than did those boys who failed to perform adequately. Except where girls were paired with a non-friend, both passing and failing female children showed a strong equality orientation, giving the highest acceptability rating to the equal allocation of reward. The only condition in which girls were not equalitarian was when the other girl partner was disliked.

Similar patterns have been found even among preschool children. Leventhal and Anderson (1970) report that boys with superior performance took more reward than boys in equal performance conditions while girls with superior performance took about half the reward in both the equal and superior performance conditions. Both boys and girls in the inferior

performance condition took more than half the reward and minimized their partners performance. In another study of preschoolers, Leventhal, Popp, and Sawyer (1973) report that boys tended to give more to a better performer than did girls who tended to give equal rewards to both performers.

The above studies are but a sample of the research findings on sex and equity behavior. Leventhal (1973) reviewed a large body of literature to examine the effects of sex on the distribution of rewards. Many of these studies show males to prefer allocating rewards on the basis of performance and females to prefer distributing rewards equally regardless of performance. They also show that when males deviate from an equity norm it is more on the exploitive side of equity while females display generosity and generally prefer equality or deviation from equity that is unfavorable to themselves.

Explanation of Sex Differences in Equity Behavior.

Many post hoc explanations exist concerning the differential responses of males and females to equity norms in the distribution of resources. Many of these explanations are grounded in assumptions about differences in sex role socialization. Leventhal and Anderson (1970) for example, suggest that parents may actively discourage young girls from taking a reward at another childs expense even when their performance is superior. Several studies have suggested that males are socialized to be more competitive than females (e.g., Benton, 1971; Leventhal et al., 1973), or at least that females perceive that they are expected to be nonachievement oriented in the presence of men (Wyer and Malinowski, 1972). Perhaps the most precise statement regarding the sex differentiation hypotheses is provided by Vinacke (1959) who relies on Parsons (1955)

analysis of sex roles in the nuclear family to explain male-female differences in coalition formations, bargaining, and reward allocation in triads. Parsons suggests that the male role in the family is primarily instrumental and concerns relations of the system to its situation outside the system, to meeting adaptive conditions of its maintenance of equilibrium, and "instrumentally" establishing the desired relations to external goal-objects (1955:47). He argues that the female role is expressive and concerns the "internal affairs" of the system, the maintenance of integrative relations between the members, and regulation of the patterns and tension levels of its component units (1955:47). This differentiation results in males tending to develop competitive executive roles, and women supportive, integrating roles. Vinacke suggests that this may account for the "exploitative" behavior of males and "accomodative" behavior of females in bargaining and reward allocation in triads. The notion of a "masculine" (competive) and "feminine" (accomodative) strategy is used to explain sex differences in coalition formation, bargaining, and reward allocation in several additional studies (e.g., Bond and Vinacke, 1961; Vinacke and Gullickson, 1964; Uesugi and Vinacke, 1963; and Wahba, 1962).

Leventhal (1973) argues that the results of these studies are best explained in terms of sex differences in achievement motivation rather than a sex difference in exploitativeness. Analyzing several equity studies and studies of reward allocation in triads, he concludes that women strive for affiliitative achievement and men strive for task achievement. Thus, it is not the case that women are not achievement oriented, they are oriented toward achieving different goals than men.

While the above explanations of sex differences in reward allocation and equity behavior may differ somewhat, they all stress that personality

and cognitive differences, presumably the result of differential socialization, are responsible for the differential responses of males and females in reward allocation and to inequity. Recently, an alternative, and competing, explanation for these sex differences has been proposed. Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill (1977) review a large number of studies which report sex differences in a variety of behaviors, including several studies of reward allocation and equity behavior. With regard to reward allocation and equity behavior, they argue that women appear to be neither more competitive nor more cooperative than men. In addition, they explicitly reject the sex role differentiation hypothesis advanced in several of the above studies and propose an alternative to this explanation derived, in part, from status value and expectation states theory (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, 1973). While Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill examine a wide range of behaviors in conflict, coalition formation and bargaining studies, we are concerned here with the specific application of their theory to patterns of reward allocation and equity behavior <u>per se</u>. Thus, we will state Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neills' general propositions and indicate how they apply to reported sex differences in equity behavior. The following propositions are held to apply to both men and women in both same-sex and mixed-sex settings:

Statement II - A. In the absence of information to the contrary, a task contribution by one member of a task-oriented group which is accepted by others will be assumed by both self and others to raise the status of the contributor relative to the status of others.

B. (1) Raising one's own status relative to the status of others is legitimate for persons with high external status but not for those with low

external status. (2) Since men have higher status than women, raising one's status relative to status of others within a small groups is legitimate for men but not for women.

C. The 'information to the contrary" referred to in statement II-A may be (1) information that a person is motivated to help others in the groups rather than to raise his/her own status or (2) that the person legitimately has been assigned a higher status than others (for example, been appointed leader by an outside authority).

D. Acts that will result in raising one's own status relative to others will be expected from persons for whom it is legitimate to raise their status relative to others; such acts will not be expected or accepted from persons for whom it is not legitimate.

E. These statements hold independently of performance expectations. (1976:96-97).

Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill go on to suggest that contributions to a task may be viewed as a type of competition because of their implications for the distribution of rewards. Thus, if females (lower status) distributed a reward according to their level of task contribution (equity) her task contribution would be viewed as illegitimate because it would be viewed as an effort of a lower status person to raise their status relative to the status of others. If, however, females took less than their actual level of contribution, their task contribution would be perceived to be

legitimate because, even if their actual task contributions was equal to the males task contribution, the lower levels of rewards they take would be viewed as an attempt to help others in the groups and not to increase their own status. On the bases of this proposition, Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill predict that when task contributions and rewards can be separated operationally, women should demand less reward than men for the same level of contribution, which is precisely what Leventhal and Lane (1970) and several others report. Thus, according to Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill, the fact that females typically take less than they deserve according to an equity norm is due to the status expectations they have regarding their sex and not to general personality or cognitive differences as a result of sex role socialization.

While the Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill analysis is compelling, their hypothesis, like the sex role differentiation hypothesis, is involked post hoc in the sense that it is not directly tested. A test of the sex role differentiation vs. the Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill hypotheses of sex differences in reward allocation and equity behavior has yet to be conducted. Since these two hypotheses make essentially the same predictions, the problem now becomes how a critical test might be conducted. One might simply attempt to measure the status expectations held by males and females, but this would hardly suffice since those of the opposing theoretical persuasion might argue that status expectations are simply a part of the general constilation of "feminine" traits associated with sex role socialization.

One possible way that these two hypotheses can be tested is if differential sex role characteristics can be measured and manipulated in an experimental setting. Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill argue that their

hypothesis applied to both same and mixed-sex settings. Thus, according to Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill, if two females are in a setting where they have received rewards lower than dictated by their actual task contribution they should not, if given the opportunity, reallocate that reward distribution in a manner consistant with their task contribution. If, however, reward allocations are influenced by differential sex role characteristics, and if we can assume that both males and females can, to differing degrees, internalize "masculine" and "feminine" traits, then it will be possible to hold status expectations (sex) constant and manipulate sex role traits. If the Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill hypothesis is correct (viz., that women do not reward themselves equitably because raising their status relative to others is not legitimate for women) then no differences among women with masculine vs. feminine character traits should exist. On the other hand, if sex role characteristics do in fact explain differences in equity behavior we should find that those females with masculine traits reward themselves consistant with their task contribution (equitably) while those females with feminine traits should reward themselves at a level lower than their actual task contribution.

Measuring Masculine and Feminine Characteristics.

All of what has been proposed above is, of course, predicated on being able to measure masculine and feminine character traits. Recently Bem (1974) developed a sex-role inventory that treats masculinity and feminity as two independent dimensions. Bem contends that this inventory makes it possible to characterize a person as masculine, feminine, or "androgynous" (not sex typed) as a function of the difference between his or her endorsement of masculine and feminine personality characteristics.

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) consists of 20 masculine characteristics, 20 feminine characteristics, and 20 social desirability items that are completely neutral with respect to sex. The BSRI asks a person to indicate on a 7-point scale how well each of the 60 masculine, feminine, and neutral personality characteristics describes himself. The scale ranges from 1 (Never or almost never true) to 7 (Always or almost always true) and is labeled at each point. The masculine characteristics reflect an instrumental orientation and a cognitive focus on "getting the job done" while the feminine items reflect an expressive orientation and an effective concern for the welfare of others.

From the results of various psychomatric analysis, Bem reports that: (a) the dimensions of masculinity and feminity are empirically as well as logically independent; (b) the concept of psychological androgyny is a reliable one; and (c) highly sex-typed scores do not reflect a tendency to respond in a socially desirable direction, but rather a specific tendency to describe oneself in accordance with sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women (1974, 159).

By employing the BSRI we are able to assign subjects to an inequity experiment on the basis of their sex role characteristics. The Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill hypotheses will be supported if no differences between masculine and feminine females exist and if females in general reallocate rewards at a lower level than their task contributions. On the other hand, the sex role differentiation hypothesis will be supported if significant differences exist between masculine and feminine females and if masculine females reallocate the reward in accordance with their task contributions and feminine females reallocate the rewards at a level lower than their task contributions.

Method

Subjects. Forty female undergraduate students at a metropolitan University in the Mid-South served as subjects in 20 dyads. Subjects were recruited from the introductory course in Sociology. Subjects were told that they would receive extra credit for participating in the experiment.

Apparatus. Sex-role type was assessed using the Bem Sex-Roles Index (1974). This index consists of 60 personality characteristics, which are scored on a scale from one (never or almost never true) to seven (always or almost always true). From the 60 item index, four scores are computed: (1) masculinity, (2) feminity, (3) androgyny, and (4) social desirability. The masculinity scale and the feminity scale each contain 20 items. Bem's selection of the items as masculine or feminine was based on a conception of the sex-typed person as someone who has internalized society's sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women. These personality characteristics were selected as masculine or feminine on the basis of sex-typed social desirability and not on the basis of differential endorsement by males and females (Bem, 1974, p. 155). The remaining 20 items on the index comprise a social desirability scale that is completely neutral with respect to sex. According to Bem, this scale serves primarily to provide a neutral context for the masculinity and feminity scales (Bem, 1974, p. 156).

The masculinity, feminity, and social desirability scores are computed by simple calculating the average weight for the 20 designated items. The androgyny score is computed as the standardized difference between one's masculinity and feminity scores. If this standardized score falls between $\pm$2.025, an individual is labeled androgynous, or one who is able to blend together both masculine and feminine traits. If the standardized score

equals or exceeds 2.025 in absolute value, an individual is considered sex-typed masculine or feminine. Bem notes that the greater the absolute value of the androgyny score, the more the person is sex-typed or sex reversed with high positive scores indicating feminity and high negative scores indicating masculinity (1974:158). A 'masculine' sex role thus represents not only the endorsement of masculine attributes but the simultaneous rejection of feminine attributes. Similarly, a 'feminine' sex role represents not only the endorsement of feminine attributes but the simultaneous rejection of masculine attributes (Bem, 1974, p. 158).

The experiment was conducted in a laboratory setting comprised of three adjacent rooms. The center room served as the control room from which the experimenter manipulated the reward distributions. In each outer room there was a display console, indicating to each subject how her partner allegedly split rewards (extra credit minutes). Each subject was given five anagram tasks, one on each of five sheets of paper.

Procedure. In the initial session, subjects were administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory measuring the degree to which females endorse a feminine, masculine, or androgenous sex-role for themselves. Of the 40 subjects chosen for the experimental sessions, 20 were sex typed feminine and 20 were either sex typed masculine or were androgynous, though close to the masculine sex type.

At the beginning of the experiment, subjects were informed that they had been chosen to participate in a study evaluating individual versus group performance. Participants were told that for this study individuals either worked together as a group or apart from each other, though rewards were shared between the partners in both situations. All

subjects were told that they would participate in the condition where subjects worked apart from each other yet shared rewards (extra credit minutes). Each subject was informed that the distribution of rewards would be determined by one of the two partners. Subjects were told that a lottery would be used to determine which of them would divide the extra credit minutes after each trial. Subjects were individually told that at the end of the experiment, the person not given the opportunity to divide the extra credit minutes would have a chance to modify the distribution of rewards. By using a bogus lottery, both subjects labored under the impression that the partner was splitting the rewards. In actuality, the experimenter from within the control room was dividing the extra credit minutes by putting up an unjust division of these rewards on the display consoles in four of the five trials.

The task in which the inequity occured was a game of anagrams. On a sheet of paper each subject was given a word and was instructed to construct from this word as many words as possible within three minutes. Subjects were told that the total number of words formed (regardless of duplication across lists) would be evaluated on a sliding scale for determining extra credit minutes. The extra credit minutes earned for each trial were allegedly pooled and distributed by the partner winning the bogus lottery.

After completion of each anagram task, subjects were individually asked to report the number of words formed. The experimenter then reported back to each subject that the number of words formed by each were relatively close, with the subject having between one and three more anagrams than her partner on each trial. Following this disclosure, the

experimenter reported to each subject the total number of extra credit minutes earned for a given trial. This report was followed by a display of how the partner allegedly split the extra credit minutes. This procedure was repeated for a total of five trials per dyad. In the first trial, the reward was split equitably. In the final four trials, the rewards were divided unjustly, to the detriment of the subjects. Of the total 210 extra credit minutes, 75 were given to subject and 125 were given to partner.

Following the completion of five trials, each subject was given the opportunity to modify or change the number of extra credit minutes received in the distribution or rewards. The number of credit minutes taken away from partner and given to self was the measure of reward reallocation on the part of each subject. Subjects typed masculine and feminine were randomly assigned. There were no differences in the results for either group based upon their partner's sex-role type.

Results and Discussion

An analysis of the results of our experiment indicate that masculine and feminine sex-typed females did differ significantly in reallocating the original inequitable reward distribution ($t(38) = 6.95$; $P < .001$). The mean number of credit minutes taken from their partner and redistributed to themselves by females who were sex-typed feminine was 25.15. On the average, this redistribution alloted 102.65 minutes for the subject and 107.35 minutes for her partner. Although the feminine sex-typed females were aware of their partners' somewhat lower performance when they reallocated the credit minutes, they took less for themselves than they allocated their partner. In contrast, the mean number of credit minutes redistributed to themselves by females who were sex-typed masculine was

34.0. This redistribution alloted an average of 109.0 minutes for subject and 101.0 for partner. This redistribution is clearly in the direction of an equity norm. The unequal distribution of credit minutes is consistant with, according to an equity norm, the slightly higher performance of the subject on the anagram task. Through redistribution, the rewards became more proportional to the performance on the task.

To determine the strength of the association between the subjects' androgeny score and the amount of credit points they reallocated to themselves, two zero-order correlations were computed. Since Bem (1974) describes the BSRI as an index that is sensitive to degrees of masculinity and feminity, the degree of association between masculinity and femininity and reallocation behavior can also be examined. The correlation for those subjects sex-typed feminine was -.69 ($P < .001$) and for those sex-typed masculine, -.87 ($P < .001$). These high inverse correlations indicate that as androgeny score increases (becomes more positive and therefore more feminine), the number of credit minutes redistributed decreases. Thus, the more sex-typed feminine the less the subjects reallocated credit points to themselves. In contrast, the more negative the score (the more masculine) the greater amount of credit points the subjects reallocated to themselves.

The purpose of the present research was to test two competing hypotheses concerning reward allocation under conditions of inequity. The Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill hypothesis is developed from several propositions. In sum, it proposes that because females have lower status than men and because it is not legitimate for persons with lower status to raise their status relative to others, women will not take rewards (a source of status) proportional to their task contribution, even when it

is equitable to do so. The Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill hypothesis would have been supported if no differences existed between the masculine and feminine groups and if both masculine and feminine sex-typed subjects had reallocated the credit points at a level lower than their performance. The above findings show that masculine sex-typed females reallocated rewards on the basis of task performance while feminine sex-typed females reallocate less to themselves than they deserve on the basis of their task performance. Thus neither of the conditions necessary to support the Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill hypothesis are met by the data.

The hypothesis advanced by Vinacke (1959) and several others proposes that sex differences in reward allocation and equity behavior are a consequence of the differential sex role socialization of men and women. Thus, masculine and feminine sex role expectations or personality differences are held to account for behavioral differences in reward allocation. In the present experiment we assigned female subjects on the basis of their masculine and feminine sex role characteristics to test the prediction that these characteristics account for behavioral differences. Masculine females subjects reallocated significantly more of the reward to themselves than feminine females and masculine females reallocated the reward on the basis of their task performance while feminine females took less than they deserved according their task performance. Thus, both of the conditions stated in the sex-role hypothesis are presented in the data. The findings clearly support the sex-role hypothesis and not the hypothesis proposed by Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill.

It is quite likely that ten or fifteen years ago considerably fewer females would have scored high on the masculine side of the BSRI.

Increasingly women are gaining access to social positions that encourage more competitive, and traditionally masculine, behaviors (Helson, 1972). At the same time men are becoming less restricted by the traditional masculine sex role expectations. If this change in traditional sex-typed roles for men and women continues, it is likely that the sex differences reported in many previous studies may no longer hold true.

Footnote

1. Walster et al. (1973) provide a detailed formula for determining equity, but for illustrative purposes we have used the less detailed equity formula set for by Adams (1965).

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